

**The Influence of Society's Perceptions and Stereotypes on African American Women
Administrators' Leadership Practices**

by

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Abstract

African American female educational leaders have historically faced multiple racial and gender challenges (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). These perceived challenges could bear impact on African American women's actual leadership practices. African American women experience daily, the challenges of duality in their roles: the color of their skin (Meyerson, 2001) and their gender (S.N. Jones, 2003). The challenge of navigating the world through the lens of race and gender continually plays a part in the lived experiences of African American women; placing them at an intersection between race and gender across specific social contexts.

An examination on literature related to African American women in educational leadership positions affirms that little significant study has been undertaken on the topic of how perceptions and stereotypes impact African American women's leadership practices and, indeed, that the field could benefit from further, focused study.

The purpose of this study was to examine the manner in which perceptions of and stereotypes about African American women impact their leadership practices. Four African American women educational administrators who work in school districts in Minnesota were asked to reflect on race/gender issues in their roles as educational leaders. The findings of this study will provide some first steps for future African American women leaders on navigating the role of an educational administrator as an African American and as a woman. The research questions for the study were:

1. What race/gender issues do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having impacted their leadership practices?
2. What strategies do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?
3. How have identified strategies of select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, assisted them in developing their leadership practices?

Commonalities and collective themes were found in the experiences of the African American women educational administrators dealing with race/gender issues. Whether it was in their role as a female or as an African American, each administrator developed strategies on how to deal with race and gender issues. The need to develop these strategies was imperative in order for each administrator to strive and be successful in their roles.

Each educational administrator brought emotion, confidence, passion and tiredness to their participation in this study. They want to stop being marginalized. They want to be recognized, and have the right to be their real self—this was a thread that ran throughout the participants' interviews. It was apparent, that the need to work for social justice in the area of education is continual...

As the educational administrators from this study continue to face race/gender issues and work toward social justice, the words of each administrator offers advice for not only future African American women educators to reflect on, but society as a whole. Only once these reflections and discussions occur will race/gender issues for African American women educational administrators be addressed.

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To all of my beautiful, strong Black women administrators who agreed to take part in this study. Your story has been shared, may it yield acknowledgement to your struggle and of your strength.

And she had nothing to fall back on; not maleness, not whiteness, not ladyhood, not anything. And out of the profound desolation of her reality she may well have invented herself. -Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, p. 63

Dedication

In honor of the Lord Almighty, all of my thanks and worship go to HIM.

Old Newtonian physics claimed that things have an objective reality separate from our perception of them. Quantum physics, and particularly Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, reveal that, as our perception of an object changes, the object itself literally changes. -

Williamson, 1996

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Chapter I: INTRODUCTION

African American female educational leaders have historically faced multiple racial and gender challenges (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). These perceived challenges could bear impact on African American women's actual leadership practices. African American women experience

daily, the challenges of duality in their roles: the color of their skin (Meyerson, 2001) and their gender (Jones, 2003). The challenge of navigating the world through the lens of race and gender continually plays a part in the lived experiences of African American women; placing them at an intersection between race and gender across specific social contexts. This intersectionality helps to shape group experiences (Collins, 1998). The duality of race and gender places African American women in the position of being marginalized and excludes them as agents of knowledge (Collins, 2000).

An examination on literature related to African American women in educational leadership positions affirms that little significant study has been undertaken on the topic of how perceptions and stereotypes impact African American women's leadership practices and, indeed, that the field could benefit from further, focused study. Most literature on educational leadership has focused on White males as their role models for women (Parker, 2005). This trend has led to a deficit in women's (particularly African American women's) knowledge of, and contribution to the construction of leadership. Historically, issues surrounding leadership coupled with gender and race have not shared the experiences of African American and Hispanic American women (Kochamba & Murray, 2000; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995).

The absence of African American women's voices in the field of educational administration has predominately led to a dearth of studies focused on relating the emergence of African American women's leadership in education. "The notion that African American women leaders are an invisible group on the sidelines that can be easily combined with other groups is a convenient fiction that conceals their power and importance" (Etter-Lewis, 1993, p. xvii). The value of adding African American women experiences and expertise to the field of educational administration can be readily understood in the context of the substantial growth in the number

of students of color in Minnesota's public schools. The Minnesota Department of Education data revealed that the number of African American students in Minnesota schools increased by 23.4% from 2006 to 2014. During this same time period the number of African American principals increased by a comparatively small 4.8%.

The low percentage of African American principals and the lack of African American women leaders' knowledge of leadership studies have led to a large gap of information regarding African American women leaders. "Viewing leadership through the lens of race, gender, and social class offers a perspective of leadership that appears to be missing from traditional and dominant theories of leadership (Stanley, 2009, p.552). This in turn has led to African American women leaders in schools carefully walking a fine line of what identity they should embody in their leadership roles. Reed and Evans (2008) say the school leaders they studied "moved between identities based on the ways in which 'being black' was defined and by whom" (p. 497).

The manner in which a person is identified in society plays a critical role in how others perceive that person and how he or she perceives him or herself. The interplay between the individual and the environment aids in constructing an individual's identity. The relationship between the environment and the individual explains the term social identity (Verkuyten, 2005)." Social identity refers to the question of what someone is taken to be socially" (Stone, 1962 as cited by Verkuyten, 2005, p.42). The African American identity revolves around the social situation in which the African American educational leader finds herself. "For African Americans, the differences in experiences, socialization, job opportunities, recent family legacy, etc., perhaps more than in earlier periods, signify vast variations in what can be considered the 'African American identity' (Reed and Evans, 2008, p.489)." As a distinctive figure in society the African American woman is assigned multiple descriptors. She has been identified by society

as an activist, caregiver and agitator to name a few. “Social identity can be characterized as the way in which a person and/or group is socially defined and positioned in society” (Reed and Evans, 2008, p. 488). In light of this, the following questions arise for the African American woman: who does the African American woman see reflected in her mirror? Has she been able to create her own identity? As she walks down a street and strangers observe her, how is she classified and expected to act? How is she perceived? How is she identified by society?

In order to understand the African American woman leader, it is important first to understand how she is identified. Perpetually working through the process of defining oneself as an African American woman can become difficult and confusing. It became apparent that African American women needed to find their own voice. Byrd (2009) states, “Bringing the lived experiences and leadership perspectives of African American women into the discourse on leadership may be a beginning toward developing more sociocultural and inclusive theories of leadership” (p. 583).

Theoretical Perspectives

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Black Feminist Theory (BFT) provide research on the African American woman’s socially constructed identity. These theories give a deeper understanding on how African American women are perceived and historically how race and gender issues play a role in the lived experiences of the African American female (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) analyzes how race and racism are found at the center of United States society (Crenshaw, 1988). This theoretical framework looks at how the power structures of white privilege marginalize people of color. Witherspoon and Mitchell (2009) reflect on CRT being grounded in the communal wisdom of, “African Americans grappling with the tensions between assimilation and achievement, and cultural insubordination and the ultimate

loss of a distinct cultural identity” (p. 656). CRT believes this wrestling in dealing with oppression leads to racism being seen as the norm, and helps to support the necessity of providing alternate perspectives. Howard-Hamilton (2003) shares “ Counter-storytelling is used to cast doubt of existing ideas or myths held by majority group members” (p.23).

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) developed by Patricia H. Collins in 1990 analyzes the impact of intersectionality: the examination of race and gender and its impact on creating a system of unequal power for Black women (Lloyd-Jones, 2014). The need to circumnavigate multiple identities places African American women in an oppressed status. “Oppression describes any unjust situation where, systemically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to resources of society” (Collins, 2000, p. 6). BFT offers a background on how African American women perceive, deal and find solutions to situations (Byrd, 2009).

The African American woman has sought places to fit in and alternative ways to belong, but to no avail. Howard-Hamilton (2003) states, “A sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural fit between the experiences of African American women and the dominant group” (p. 21). Therefore, it is important to have ideas produced by Black women that represent the standpoint of Black women (Collins, 2009).

The Black Feminist Theory portrays themes of how Black women’s lives are shaped and produced by their experiences. BFT acknowledges commonalities among Black women’s experiences and stories, as well as understanding the diversity of age, sexual orientation, class, religion, all shed insight into how the concepts about African American women have been formed (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Critical Race Theory also helps lend an understanding on how oppression has helped to form the African American woman's identity. CRT continues to combat against perceived ideas about African American women by focusing attention on social injustices and social inequities (Lloyd-Jones, 2009).

The tenets of both theoretical frameworks are presented in Table 1 and provide this study with information on the traditional challenges Black women leaders face as they work toward finding solutions to issues that impact their positions.

Table 1. Tenets of Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory	Black Feminist Theory
<p><u>The Permanence of Racism</u> Critical Race Theory asserts that racism is a permanent component of life in the United States.</p>	<p><u>History is Produced by Black Women</u> The framework is shaped and produced by experiences Black women have encountered in their lives, even though others have documented their stories.</p>

<p><u>Critique of Liberalism</u> Critical Race Theory challenges several basic notions that have been embraced by legal ideology. These must be deconstructed and challenged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • colorblindness, • the race neutrality, • incremental change, • equality vs. equity, and • the myth of meritocracy. 	<p><u>Intersections of Experiences</u> Although the stories and experiences of each woman are unique, there are intersections of experiences between and among Black women.</p>
<p><u>Counter-Storytelling</u> Critical Race Theory uses the approach of telling a story that aims to cast doubt on the validity of accepted views and narratives, especially those constructed and held by the dominant culture.</p>	<p><u>Multiple Contexts as a Group</u> Although commonalities do exist among black women, the diversity of class, religion, age, and sexual orientation of Black women as a group are multiple contexts from which their experiences can be revealed and understood.</p>
<p><u>Whiteness as a Property</u> Critical Race Theory looks at how racial identity and property are deeply interrelated concepts in the United States. Whiteness involved as a form of property, protected by law and share several attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right of disposition • The right to use and enjoyment • Reputation and status property • The absolute right to exclude 	<p><u>Produced Theories Represent Black Women's Standpoint</u> The themes may not become apparent to African American women initially, so one role of "Black female intellectuals is to produce facts and theories about Black female experience that will clarify a Black woman's standpoint for Black women (Collins, 2002, p.469).</p>
<p><u>Interest Convergence</u> Critical Race Theory states civil rights gains should be interpreted with measured enthusiasm because unless it is first in the interest of the dominant group to advance that of the subordinate group, advancement of such interest</p>	
<p>Pacific Educational Group, 2016</p>	<p>Howard-Hamilton, 2003. p. 21</p>

Statement of the Problem

Many perceptions of African American women are prevalent in society. These views can be seen as having an impact on the perceptions of African American women's attributes and their skills as leaders. Additionally, these views are indeed different from the portrayal of women in other ethnic groups. For example, unlike Hispanic American females, African American females have not been depicted as submissive or passive (Loque, 2002). Such skewed portrayals, coupled

with the lack of information on the leadership skills of African American women could play a part in society's current perception/s of African American women as leaders.

Most of the current research conducted on leadership focuses on the White male leadership model (Parker, 2005). Byrd (2009) states, "As a result, traditional and dominant leadership theories may not adequately address African American women's leadership in terms of intersectionality (race, gender, and social class)" (p. 582). A limited amount of research was found on how perceptions of and stereotypes about African American women impact their leadership practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose and rationale of this study is to examine the manner in which perceptions of and stereotypes about African American women impact their leadership practices. With the need to provide multiple perspectives to the literature on leadership, this study will add to the field of research by exploring African American women's educational leadership practices and experiences.

The goal of the qualitative study is two-fold: (1) this study will share African American women educational leaders' perspectives on race/gender issues they encounter as leaders; (2) to provide a first step to future African American women leaders on navigating the educational leader's role as a person of color.

Assumptions of the Study

The participants interviewed for this study are providing observations and experiences, as they personally perceive them. It is assumed that all participants are answering the interview questions openly and honestly.

Delimitations

1. This study only interviewed African American women in the educational leadership positions of principal and assistant superintendent.
2. This study involved a limited sample of four African American women participants from school districts in Minnesota.
3. While the researcher identified common themes from among all of the participants, respect for each individual's observations and experiences without generalizing individual participant's experiences was taken into account by the researcher.
4. Due to the researcher fitting the criteria of the participants in the study, steps were taken to ensure that only the participants' views were included.

Research Questions

This study examines how perceptions and stereotypes about African American women impact their leadership practices, using the following research questions:

1. What race/gender issues do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having impacted their leadership practices?
2. What strategies do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?
3. How have identified strategies of select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, assisted them in developing their leadership practices?

Definition of the Terms

For the purpose of this study, select definitions of key terms have been provided to assist the reader in navigating the literature reviewed and researcher's intent.

African American: a term described as an American of African and especially of black African descent (Merriam-Webster.com, 2014).

Black: a term defined as of or relating to any of the various population groups having dark pigmentation of the skin; of or relating to the African-American people or their culture (Merriam-Webster.com, 2014).

White: a term defined as of relating to a race of people who have light colored skin and who came originally from Europe (Merriam-Webster.com, 2014)

White Privilege: is a set of advantage and/or immunities that white people benefit from on a daily basis beyond those common to all others. White privilege can exist without white people's conscious knowledge of its presence and it helps to maintain the racial hierarchy in this country (University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2003).

Class (social): a status hierarchy in which individuals and groups are classified on the basis of esteem and prestige acquired mainly through economic success and accumulation of wealth (Business Dictionary.com, 2016).

Dominant Culture: Whereas traditional societies can be characterized by a high consistency of cultural traits and customs, modern societies are often a conglomeration of different, often competing, cultures and subcultures. In such a situation of diversity a dominant culture is one that is, through economic or political power, its values, languages, and ways of behaving on a subordinate culture or cultures (Encyclopedia.com, 2016).

Gender: a term defined as the state of being male or female; the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one sex (Merriam-Webster.com, 2014).

Race: a term defined as a categorical distinction based on phenotypical characteristics that, from a historical point of view, has been imposed by others (racialization) (Verkuyten, 2005, p. 57).

Intersectionality: refers to the interactivity of social identity structure such as race, class, and gender in fostering life experiences, especially experiences of privilege and oppression (Gopaldas, 2013, p. 90).

Stereotype: to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same (Merriam-Webster.com, 2014).

Organization of the Study

Chapter one provides an introduction to the study and briefly explains two theoretical frameworks. It is comprised of the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and three guiding research questions. Definitions of key terms are included to assist the reader in navigating through the research. Chapter two provides a review of the literature. Summaries of research are provided in the areas of history of African American women leadership in education, females in leadership and effective leadership practices. Next, the theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Theory are described in detail. Chapter three consists of the methodology of the study, including: information on the qualitative method that will be used in the research, the sample size, instrumentation used for the study, data collection procedures, data analyses, and how the data will be analyzed. Chapter four provides the data and the analysis of the data. It will report the findings of the study on how perceptions and stereotypes impacted the selected African American women's leadership practices. Chapter

five briefly reviews the summary of the study and will provide conclusions and recommendations about the study. The three guiding research questions from chapter one in regards to African American women's leadership practices will be answered.

Chapter II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Common themes became apparent in the survey of relevant literature on how society's perceptions and stereotypes about African American women impact their leadership practices.

This literature review categorizes those themes into the following: (1) history of African American women leadership in education (2) the role of females in leadership and (3) identification of effective leadership practices. In order to gain insight on societal issues that African American women encounter, the following two theoretical frameworks are presented: Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). The reader should note that in this literature review, the terms *African American* and *Black* are used interchangeably.

History of African American Women Leadership in Education

Although enslaved Blacks that came to America from Africa were challenged with many barriers and restrictions, educational leadership was eventually used as an agent of change for people of African heritage. “African American educational leaders linked the struggle for education with social justice, acting within a moral imperative. Educational leadership for African Americans meant fighting to overcome the social barriers of poverty and class, slavery and institutionalized racism’s inequities within a democratic society (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 592).” To achieve this, community engagement was central to Black educational leadership; strategies of leverage and coalition were employed in the absence of power. “Black leaders formed fraternal orders and literacy groups and organized church congregations to support collective interests, recognizing that the community’s strengths were needed to bring about change” (Ibid).

Education and educational leadership for African Americans were intertwined. Building on the foundation of social justice and the need to overcome barriers to make social change led many Black women to serve as role models for school leadership (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). The chance to be educated didn’t come easy for the Black woman. While White women had permission to attend school prior to the 1900s, it was still illegal for Blacks to attend school

(Alston, 2005). During this time, while White men and women were predominately making up the profile of the teaching profession, Black women were working to create their own educational groups. Murtadha and Watts (2005) noted in 1834, in the state of New York the Colored Ladies Literary Society was formed and other groups such as the African-American Female Intelligence Society of Boston were established. “Organized groups provided leadership and supported education as Black people coalesced to bring about radical change” (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 594).

As organized groups were being developed, the idea of educational attainment was not widely accepted for people of color, who were viewed as less than equal. Fighting against the odds, some African American women did manage to attend college and by the nineteenth century, Black women were allowed to teach in segregated schools, but for low pay. As Black women worked hard to become educated and to be respected in the field of education, society’s perception of them as leaders, or even to be seen as people, did not change. They were perceived as less than human, not equals (Howard-Hamilton, 2003). This was even true in the homestead.

If one assumes that real men work and real women take care of families, then African Americans suffer from deficient ideas concerning gender. In particular, Black women become less feminine, because they work outside of the home, work for pay and thus compete with men, and their work take them away from their children. (Collins, 2000, pp. 53-54)

As African American women worked through the obstacles of their gender and race, they soon came face-to-face with double oppression—racism and sexism—due to their viewed subservient status, which was imposed by White men and women as well as Black men (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Although oppressed, African American women learned how to navigate their worlds of intersectionality (race, gender and social class). They became leaders in working to build their

communities. The furtherance of finding ways to build educational institutions for Black children drove Black women leaders to become innovative and work around the barriers that were put in front of them. Education was important to Black families and many African American women leaders helped to establish schools and social agencies by raising funds (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). History is filled with the names of Black females who helped their communities establish schools from the elementary level to the collegiate level. This institution building through the work of Black women helped to create a mass movement toward females becoming educational leaders (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Nannie Helen Burroughs, Lucy Laney and Mary McLeod Bethune are among the top recognized for their leadership in both education and community. These women provided a source for understanding Black children and Black communities, as well as having served as role models (Ibid).

Mary McLeod Bethune was an example of an exceptional leader. She started her first school in 1904 for Blacks in Florida. Her growing student population soon had her seeking a larger facility. She and her students salvaged material for the school and sought materials from community members. Bethune even provided a room for medical services. The auditorium at the school was used to hold rallies (Ibid). Bethune's schools not only played a role in education for the community but also helped the extended African American community overall. She played a critical leadership role in finding resources needed to support education and the public (Ibid).

Nannie Helen Burroughs displayed strong leadership in 1909 when she helped open the National Training School for Girls in Northeast Washington, D.C. Her fight against the Black male leadership of the National Baptist Conference accompanied her fight against racism. Burroughs was dissatisfied with the Baptist Church's stances on Black women, believing Black women were trading their once enslavement to White men, for the suppression of Black men

(Ibid). Burroughs took on many roles as a civil rights advocate, religious leader and educator to work toward social justice (Ibid).

Multiple identities have been attached to African American women, such as: spiritualist, freedom fighter, caregiver, civic leader, and matriarch. “Perhaps different from their white counterparts, the education and the emerging professionalism of African American women may be attributed to the multiple identities, ‘leadership’ roles, and hardship many faced in their families and in the African American community” (Reed & Evans, 2008, p. 494).

Notwithstanding, through learning their various roles and surviving hardships, African American women have built their professionalism and remain strong leaders in their communities, their homes and at work. Though they have cared and worked tirelessly to advocate for the rights of Black people, their oppressed voices as Blacks and women remain silent in the genre of administrative leadership. In the current research on African American women and White women in educational administration, the issue of race is currently not being included. Bloom and Erlandson (2003) state:

[T]he current research on African American women versus White women in educational administration is considered a topic subsumed under the larger population of women studies. Race and class not being considered in the study of women’s leadership brings about unwanted outcomes. (p. 343)

In order to understand how African American women leadership identity has been formed, it will be important to also examine the role of women in leadership.

The Role of Females in Leadership

As stated earlier, African American women’s leadership knowledge and practices are not readily present in the literature on leadership and while women may be referenced in material, the information generally stands alone (Reed, 2012). A one-sided perspective has been shared leaving a large gap to be filled with more characteristics of effective leadership from other

groups' points of view. Why the female perspective has been left out of most literature on leadership is not clear. Females not being perceived as the 'norm' could be one of the reasons. Male leaders are seen as the norm, women leaders are seen as outside of the norm (Coleman, 2003). Men see leadership and management as a male trait and women view these traits as male as well. Reed (2012) reflects, "This view influences how women see themselves as leaders and how others perceive their leadership" (p.41). Women perceiving leadership as a male trait in turn makes women feel they need to work harder in completing leadership tasks and need to show their worthiness to be a leader (Reed, 2012).

Schein (1994) supported the theory that society views leadership and management as male oriented. In Schein's work, he revealed that assumptions about maleness and leadership, whether it be conscious or semi-conscious, were held by most men, by younger and older age groups, and also by women on a lower level. These views resulted in how women are viewed and how they view themselves (Schmuck, 1996). How society has perceived women as leaders has affected women in their pursuit of leadership by comparing them with the characteristics of their male counterparts.

These dualisms (are) deeply implicated in gendered power/knowledge relations, aligning themselves with and underpinning the distinction between masculinity and femininity. They include participation in civil society versus rootedness in hearth and home, hardness versus softness, activity versus passivity, reason versus emotion... (Paechter, 2001, p. 48) Society has placed more value on hardness versus softness/passivity, and civil society more than domestic. Because women are associated with the lesser societal values, they subsequently are associated with lesser societal status than men, and this has played a large role in leadership in our schools (Coleman, 2010).

Women understand that there are social roles and expectations governing the role of females. Schmuck (1996) states, "...they must become 'abnormal' women; they must transcend the social expectation of femaleness in order to aspire to the socially prescribed role of leader..." (p. 356). Consequently, women (especially African American women) struggle against society's

perception (and their own self-perception) about what is an effective leader. Lumby and Azaola (2014) reflected, “Women who wish to achieve and enact leadership roles must therefore contend with stepping outside the acceptable notion of what is to be a woman in order to match the leadership prototype” (p. 31).

There are many more factors and expectations that have played a role in the inability of women to reach higher-level leadership positions. Issues surrounding household and family responsibilities have slowed the climb for women (Simon & Hoyt, 2012). Simon and Hoyt (2003) remark, “Negative stereotypes about women in leadership positions are closely tied to the gender role stereotypes about men and women” (p. 233). These negative stereotypes have helped to contribute to the large disparity in top-level leadership between men and women (Simon & Hoyt, 2003). Negative stereotypes play an important role in women’s self-perception and performance outcomes (Simon & Hoyt, 2012). Prejudices and negative stereotypes about women show the need to include women’s perspectives in current literature in the area of leadership.

Today’s information on leadership is weakened without including a gender perspective. Elsewhere, Hall & Southworth (1997) stated:

Using a gender perspective creates new possibilities for exploring the lives of men and women who teach, manage and lead in education. As researchers into headship we both concluded that educational leadership is firmly rooted in professional identity. Gender, in turn, is a crucial component of the identity. Future research into headship that fails to take this and the gendered nature of schools and colleges into account is likely to be incomplete. (p. 167)

A gender perspective in leadership will provide a more diverse set of leadership traits and management styles to the field of educational leadership, although these traits are not evidently seen as a value at this time. Reed (2012) states, “Within educational leadership, the characteristics women principals bring to their leadership practice are typically undervalued”

(p.41). According to Reed (2012), women school leaders possess the following helpful traits:

- Women are able to display their emotional and compassionate sides within their leadership.
- Women develop relationships as they are navigating difficult circumstances to bring about change.
- Women are change agents.
- Women are seen as more of a democratic leader.
- Power by women leaders is seen as something to be dispersed overall for the good of the school versus having power for power's sake (pp. 41-42).

Unfortunately, women themselves often silence these positive attributes. Women school leaders like women in the larger society often distance themselves from any leadership qualities that can be perceived as feminine (Reed, 2012).

Despite the challenges faced by women in the area of leadership, they still have been able to establish some of their own leadership qualities. In turn, are the current effective leadership practices found in literature reflective of the leadership qualities that women have displayed? The following section discusses current literature regarding qualities of effective leadership practices.

Effective Leadership Practices

There are numerous definitions of leadership to be found in the literature. The correct definition of leadership is dependent on the specific area of leadership practice that is of interest to the individual (Bass, 2008). Leaders must be trained to understand the components of effective leadership practices. Leithwood, Seashore, Andersen, and Wahlstrom (2004) spoke to the following in regard to leadership preparation, "...we need to be developing leaders with large repertoire of practices and the capacity to choose from that repertoire as needed, not leaders

trained in the delivery of one “ideal” set of practices” (p.10). This sentiment on leadership lends itself to the description of social construction written by Smircich and Morgan (1982):

Leadership...is the process whereby one or more individuals succeed in attempting to frame and define the reality of others...Leadership, like other social phenomena, is socially constructed through interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) emerging as a result of the construction and actions of both leaders and the led. It involves a complicity or process of negotiations through which certain individuals, implicitly or explicitly; surrender their power to define the nature of their experiences to others. (p. 258)

This social construction view of leadership, in which interaction between the leader and the led attempts to define the reality of others, correlates to the effective leadership practices of self-awareness leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership.

Self-Awareness Leadership. As mentioned above, many people have attempted to define what makes a leader, but not often what makes a successful leader. According to Showry and Manasa (2014), “Successful leadership often surfaces when people become aware of critical personal experiences in their life, understand the driving forces, and respond by rethinking about self, redirect their moves and reshape their actions” (p. 15). Self-awareness is a soft skill that predicts managerial effectiveness and leadership success. The ability to be able to evaluate one’s own personality, and understanding how others perceive the leader’s personality is a strong trait for leaders to develop (Showry & Manasa, 2014). Leaders who subjectively analyze their actions become aware of their mental state, beliefs and desires as they interact in the workplace, especially if individuals reflect on the following:

1. Awareness of self, experiences and people that have great impact on self;
2. Understanding of individual’s values and beliefs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations;
3. Self-awareness prompts individuals to take a realistic view of one’s own development needs; and

4. Determination to shape one's life on the basis of the understanding of above settings an overarching goal and building a team to accomplish the goal over a period of time (Showry & Manasa, 2014, p. 16).

How leaders grow to identify their values and attitudes will eventually be the foundation in which a leader will begin to form their leadership practices. Effective leaders must understand how others perceive them. Showry and Mansa (2014) comment, "Early theories propose that self-awareness comprises an understanding of one's self-resources and anticipation of how one is perceived by others" (p. 17). Introspection is a tool that effective leaders can use to define their characteristics, strengths and abilities. Showry and Manasa (2014) state, "This awareness shapes a leader's decisions and determines his/her actions and behaviors" (p. 17).

As leaders form their leadership identity there is a continuous interaction between the leader and the led. These interactions can be explained through the meaning-centered approaches to leadership. The meaning-centered approach to leadership looks at leadership through an interactive process where meaning in an organization is created, sustained and grounded in the cultural norms and values of the people in the organization (Parker, 2001). In regards to African American women leaders, understanding the traits of self-awareness leadership in conjunction with their own personality, and identifying the perceptions of others, can begin to hone in on the type of leadership style that works best for them. Leaders must continue to learn from their interactions with others, and be open to cues that others give (Showry & Manasa, 2014). This will allow African American women leaders to continuously recognize their strengths and weaknesses and adjust their skills where needed. Understanding the cultural norms and values of an organization through the meaning-centered approach, guides African American women leaders to proactively and effectively interact with individuals and provide the leadership needed.

Transformational Leadership. Where self-awareness is an important tool for effective leaders to construct their reality of who they are and how they are perceived and in turn realize their effect on organizations, transformational leadership (TL) enables the leader to raise the awareness and ability of individuals to work toward common goals. A transformational leader brings to the follower's a level of consciousness to the importance of the desired outcomes and how the outcomes are reached (Burns, 1978). Creating positive change by inspiring and motivating followers to commit to reaching an organization's goal is a quality of transformational leadership. TL encourages followers to go farther than they expected, which in turn results in greater productivity (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

TL is an interactive leadership style where both the leader and the follower work together to help each other and act towards the interest of the group. The transformational leader interacts with individuals by assessing their current level of confidence and desire for the chosen results. Bass (1985) states a TL leader will motivate their staff to do more if they achieve the following:

1. Raising our level of consciousness about the importance and value of designated outcomes and ways of reaching these outcomes.
2. Getting us to transcend our own self-interests for the sake of the team, organization, or larger polity.
3. Raising our need level on Abraham Maslow's hierarchy from say, the need for security to the need for recognition, or expanding our portfolio of needs by, for example, adding the need for self-actualization to the need for recognition (p. 31). Leaders of the transformational leadership style become involved in the organizational process and focus on helping all of their followers become successful (Cherry, 2014).

Bass (1985) expanded on his original ideas and added four components to TL: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Transformational leaders provide their followers with a clear vision and help the followers by being role models to experience the same passion for the goal as the leader. It is important for the transformational leader to be able to inspire and motivate and arouse emotions in their followers. Followers trust charismatic leaders and make a better effort to work toward the organization's goals (Bass, 1985).

The transformational leader works through intellectual stimulation to help increase his/her follower's problem-solving skills, coaching individuals through open communication to reach their potential. Creativity is encouraged and followers are urged to look at new ways of doing things. Transformational leadership examines the individual and the leadership's behaviors (McClesky, 2014). "Transformational leaders stimulate and inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and also develop their own leadership capacity" (Mathew & Gupta, 2015, p. 76).

Servant Leadership. Transformational leadership focuses on the leader's skills, inspiration, vision for the organization, the relationships between the leader and the follower, and the organization's goals. Servant leadership is focused toward the needs of the followers. Robert K.

Greenleaf developed servant leadership (SL) in an essay in 1970 entitled, *The Servant as Leader*. Greenleaf describes servant leadership as the leader being a servant first, understanding that the leader wants to serve. Once the recognition of wanting to serve has come to realization, next comes the desire to lead (Boone & Makhani, 2014). The philosophy behind SL is a set of practices that improves the lives of people and also helps to improve organizations. It is

important for the servant leader to make sure others highest needs are being met (Greenleaf, 1977).

Servant leaders serve to work on the growth of their followers and the communities to which they belong. SL puts the needs of others first and uses shared leadership. The leader works to have people perform at their highest potential in the area of task effectiveness, future leadership and community stewardship (Dierendonck, Stam, Boersma, Windt & Alkema, 2013). This is done through one-to-one communication between the leader and the follower, as well as having the leader work to understand each follower's individual characteristics (Boone & Makhani, 2014). The difference between transformational leadership and servant leadership is “[t]he extent to which the leader is able to shift the primary focus of leadership from the organization to the follower is the distinguishing factor in classifying leaders as either transformational or servant leader” (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004, p. 1). A servant leader has the desire to serve and also prepares other to eventually serve as well (Dierendonck et al., 2013). The leader will direct success of the organization toward his/her followers versus him or herself.

Despite SL's ability to help others, focus on their needs, or acknowledge their work, a follower's perception of the leader is the main predictor of leadership effectiveness. “Individuals are more likely to follow leaders who they believe to be competent and effective, in this sense, the perception of leadership effectiveness represents the overall evaluation of leader more than any other possible mediating mechanism” (Dierendonck et al., 2013, p. 546).

In order for a leader to have highly effective SL leadership practice in regard to influencing a group the leader needs to adopt the following attitudes:

1. Visioning isn't everything, but it's the beginning of everything;

2. Listening is hard work requiring a major investment of personal time and effort- and it is worth every ounce of energy expended;
3. My job involves being a talent scout and committing to my staff's success;
4. It is good to give away power;
5. I am a community builder (Boone & Makhani, 2014, p. 87).

Servant leaders understand that the strength of their organization is with its people (Leadership Central.com, 2015). As leaders and their followers grow to become servants, a strong corporate social responsibility and community service follows (Dierendonck et al., 2013). This leads the organization, its leaders and its employees to be seen as valuable in creating a positive change in society.

The literature reviewed in prior sections has shared society's perception and stereotypes about African American women and the impact of those views on leadership practices and selfidentity. Themes have been provided on the history of African American women in education and the roles of females in leadership. Further discourse was held on effective leadership practices. Next, the theoretical frameworks that surround African American women leaders will be discussed in detail.

Theoretical Frameworks

Due to many of the traditional theories that were found to be general and excluding of the multiple identities concept (Howard-Hamilton, 2003), two theoretical frameworks were found to be appropriate when studying African American women: Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). In researching theoretical frameworks that helped to explain the developmental and societal issues facing African American women, it was evident that the frameworks needed to come from the lived experiences of African American women. "Selecting

appropriate theories for understanding the needs of African American women should, however, be based on their cultural, personal, and social contexts, which clearly differ significantly from those of men and women who have not experienced racial and gender oppression” (Howard Hamilton, 2003, p. 20). Understanding why African American women’s experiences differ from those of other women and men is important in defining how African-American women perceive themselves and in turn how they navigate everyday life.

Black Feminist Thought

Howard-Hamilton (2003) reveals “Overall, the development and socialization of African American women have been molded and understood with the framework of perceptions and agendas of members of the dominant society” (p. 20). Black Feminist Thought (BFT) (Collins, 2009) gave African American women the opportunity to have a voice of their own. The theory represents the standpoint of and for African American women. Three assumptions are part of the BFT theory as listed by Howard-Hamilton (2003, p. 21):

1. The framework is shaped and produced by the experiences Black women have encountered in their lives, even though others have documented their stories.
2. Although the stories and experiences of each woman are unique, there are intersections of experiences between and among Black women.
3. Although commonalities do exist among Black women, the diversity of class, religion, age, and sexual orientation of Black women as a group are multiple contexts from which their experiences can be revealed and understood.

To summarize, only a Black woman can create a Black feminist standpoint. Standpoint theory allows Black women to use stories that have been shaped by their experiences to produce

different realities. The theory also helps to change society's thoughts about the lives and work of Black women. Yonezawa (2000), as cited in Bloom and Erlandson (2003, p. 341) explains:

Standpoint theory proposes that people gain knowledge through their positions or social locations. They use the term "positionality" to "capture how people's positions in the larger social structure (e.g. race, class, gender and sexuality) influence what they are aware of and their interpretation of events. (Yonezawa, 2000, p. 111)

Further, how African American women perceive who they are, is a reflection of their positions in society in the realm of their race and gender. Black women would view their position in the world based on the confines of the larger society (Collins, 1991).

The interpretation of African American women by their African American male counterparts plays an important part in the development of the African American woman's worldview. The behavioral expectations of an African American woman affect her daily interactions with family and relationships. Collins (2009) reflects, "Definitions of appropriate gender behavior for Black women, Black men, and members of other racial/ethnic groups not only affect social institutions such as schools and labor markets, they also shape interactions" (p. 165).

Appropriate gender behavior of African American men and women being compared to that of White men and women support prevailing sexual politics (Collins, 2009). This also compares to Black men being viewed as having experienced more severe forms of racism than Black women. Collins states, "Similarly, those proclaiming that Black men experience a more severe form of racial oppression than Black women routinely counsel African American women to subjugate our needs to those of Black men" (Staples, 1979; as stated in Collins, 2009, p. 165). This subjugation of Black women is further implicated by conflicting expectations of Black manhood:

Black men have been constructed as sexually violent rapists, as brutes, and as irresponsible boys who fail to marry the mothers of their children and financially support their children. Whereas Black men under slavery knew that they were not these things, their powerlessness denied them the trappings of manhood as defined by White propertied men (Collins, 2009, p. 169).

These feelings of powerlessness as well as challenging controlling images of Black men have portrayed Black men as having to be a person in control. Collins (2009) states, “This control is often masked, all in defense of widespread beliefs that Black men must be in charge in order to regain their lost manhood” (p. 170). This has helped to create an environment in which some black women feel they must put the Black male needs before their own needs. Black women have allowed themselves to be perceived as a person of subordinate status in order to help Black men regain and retain their manhood (Collins, 2000, 2009). How Black men perceive Black women and how they perceive themselves plays a role in society’s social structure.

It is impossible for Black women to understand how they have learned to perceive themselves and how they currently fit into society’s social structure without examining the concept of intersectionality. This BFT concept examines how race, gender and social class intersect to create a system for Black women with unequal levels of privilege and power. The experiences of Black women are inseparably paired with race and gender. “African American women are referred to as “both/and” because the identity places her in two oppressed groups, Black and female” (Beale, 1970; as stated in Lloyd-Jones, 2009, p. 609).

By being placed in oppressed groups the Black woman has been inundated with negative stereotypes. Coleman (2009) states that views from the media, who has displayed Black women as Aunt Jemimas, mammies, welfare mothers and prostitutes, have left Black women to become an oppressed group. Coleman (2009) reflects,

Within the U.S. culture, racist and sexist ideologies permeate the social structure to such a degree that they become hegemonic, namely, seen as natural, normal, and inevitable. In

this context, certain assumed qualities that are attached to Black women are used to justify oppression. (p. 7)

Society's system of oppression has blocked the ideas of Black women and in turn has helped to protect White male worldviews. As stated in Collins (2009) "This larger system of oppression works to suppress the ideas of Black women intellectuals and to protect elite White male interest and worldviews" (p.7). These worldviews have created a system of social control that has been able to keep African American women in an allotted, inferior place (Collins, 2009). As African American women leaders work to get out of their appointed subordinate position, they have worked to create their own stories and define themselves. Black feminist intellectuals have helped to create commonalities among the lived experiences of Black women. These selfdefinitions of Black womanhood were designed to resist the negative controlling images of Black womanhood, advanced by Whites as well as the discriminatory social practices that these controlling images supported. In all, Black women's participation in crafting a constantly changing African American culture fostered distinctively Black and women-centered world views (Collins, 2009, p. 13).

Even as African American women began to define who they were and mixed with the society at large they were still viewed as outsiders. History shows that Black women helped to raise White children and performed domestic duties, but were never truly allowed to be part of the White family. Black women were positioned within the community and yet at the same time excluded from the community. " Because of their personal journeys, African American women have an outsider-within status that makes this group keenly aware of what must be done to liberate other oppressed people within the sphere of influence" (Bass, 2009, p. 620). Collins (2009) defines this as the "outsider-within". Black Feminist Thought has allowed oppressed Black women to seek how they can lend a voice on the "inside" versus looking in from the

“outside”.

Working from the inside allowed Black women to gain knowledge and figure out ways in which organizations were run. Soon the question rose, “If you no longer can keep Black women outside, then how best can they be regulated on the inside” (Collins, 2009, p. 299)? As African American women worked to maneuver the status of “outsider-within” structural domains of power were organized to replicate Black women subordination over time (Collins, 2009). U.S. system policies and procedures were used as the basis for structural domain of power.

“Historically, in the United States, the policies and procedures of the U. S.’ institutions and interdependent entities (ie. legal system, labor markets, schools, the housing industry, banking, insurance, news media) has worked to disadvantage African American women” (Collins, 2009, p. 295).

The continuous state of trying to overcome disadvantages and fit in on the inside can be seen in some of the challenges African American women have come across in their roles as leaders. Black Feminist Thought describes two types of power that African American women encounter (Collins, 1990, p. 600):

1. Disciplinary Domain of Power: African American women are constantly under surveillance, even African American women themselves who are in positions of leadership.
2. Hegemonic Domain of Power: Dominant groups attempt to justify actions through organizational practices and social interactions.

Surveillance emerged as an important part of institutionalized domain of power. Black women were not only continuously observed but a more serious approach of surveillance was used. This meant being looked at by everyone, from middle managers, prison guards to clerical

supervisors. “In these settings, discipline is ensured by keeping Black women as a mutually policing subordinate population under surveillance” (Collins, 2009, p. 300). Black women working on the “inside” have learned even while under surveillance to begin to understand organizational systems and to work toward ending discriminatory practices. The Black Feminist Thought has allowed Black women to work toward finding their own story and to lead social justice efforts in fighting policies and procedures that limit Black women’s status due to society’s perceptions.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) helps to address African American’s issues when addressing problems with assimilation, cultural insubordination and a loss of cultural identity. This theory was created by legal scholars to help explain how persons in power have created policies and laws that maintain/ed racial and ethnic oppression even when policies were/are positioned as race-neutral (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009). The significance of explaining this—racial bias and color blindness—is to bring to the forefront that these instances are not exceptions but regular human behavior (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009). One way in which this is done is by acknowledging and implementing a strategy that “...insists on recognizing the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing society” (HowardHamilton, 2003, p. 23). Counterstories are a primary method used by CRT to recognize such experiences. Counterstories give members of marginalized groups the opportunity to share their personal testimonies. Discussions using counterstories allows previously untold stories or different stories to ‘come to light’. Counterstories challenge the discourse and beliefs of the dominant group. The telling of counterstories call into question myths and existing ideas held by the dominant group members (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Counterstories are different from the mere surfacing of race and racism discussions—the educational system at large is trying to do this. When these discussions are being brought to the forefront, verbal, visual, conscious and unconscious offenses are made toward people of color. These abuses create a physical and mental toll on people of color. “This causes tremendous anxiety for those who experience the racist psychological battering” (Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 23). Counterstories on the other hand, help people of color adjust and adapt to the racism and stereotypes they face in society “...because it attempts to foreground race and racism in the research as well as challenge the traditional paradigms. Methods, texts, and separate discourse of race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact on commonalities of color” (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000, p. 63; Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Summary

Chapter two has provided research on the history of African American women in education, information on the roles of females in leadership, effective leadership practices, and the theoretical frameworks of Black Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory: theories that undergird the study’s methodology, outlined in chapter three.

Chapter III: METHODOLOGY

Study Purpose

The rationale behind this qualitative study is to expose and examine how race and gender perceptions and stereotypes impact African American women educational leaders and their practices. The goal of this study is two-fold: (1) this study will share African American women educational leaders’ perspectives on race/gender issues they encounter as leaders; (2) to provide a first step to future African American women leaders on navigating the educational leader’s role as a person of color.

Research Questions

In order to examine race/gender issues facing African American women leaders due to society's perceptions about African American women, the study will address the following research questions:

1. What race/gender issues do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having impacted their leadership practices?
2. What strategies do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?
3. How have identified strategies of select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, assisted them in developing their leadership practices?

Research Design

Qualitative. A qualitative method, using a phenomenological approach, will be employed in this study in order to provide a detailed account of the lived experiences of four African American women educational leaders. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as, "Qualitative research is multimethod in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). The purposes of qualitative research are to construct an understanding of how people make sense of their lives, and to describe how people interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Characteristics of the qualitative research method rely heavily on

social constructs, which align to the research found in the literature review in regard to perceptions about African American women around race and gender. Gall, Gall and Borg (2007)

list qualitative characteristics as the following:

1. Assume that social reality is constructed by the participants in it.
2. Assume that social reality is continuously constructed in local situations.
3. Assign human intentions a major role in explaining cause relationships among social phenomena.
4. Study the meanings that individuals create and other internal phenomena (p. 32).

Phenomenology. In this study the philosophy of phenomenology, which underlines qualitative research will be used (Merriam, 2009). Creswell, Hanson, Clark and Morales (2007), describes the phenomenological approach as:

Phenomenologists describe what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (e.g., grief, anger). In this way, phenomenologists work much more from the participants' specific statement and experiences rather than abstracting from their statements to construct a model from the researcher's interpretation as in grounded theory. (p. 252)

Black Feminist Theory (BFT) supports the use of the phenomenological approach. BFT framework is shaped and produced by the individual and shared experiences of Black women, even though others have documented their stories (Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

The role of the researcher in the phenomenological approach directs the researcher to look at the data objectively. Due to this topic being of interest to the researcher as an African American woman educational leader, it will be important to look at data from a fresh standpoint and to work from the participants' specific statements and experiences. This can be completed by bracketing out views before advancing with the experiences of others (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (2009) further states, "Prior to interviewing those who have had direct experience with the

phenomenon, the researcher generally explores his or her own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experience and in part to become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions” (p. 25).

Participant Selection

The participant selection process began by using the snowballing strategy. This strategy selected potential participants for the study, who then can potentially connect the researcher with other participants (Patton, 1990). From the names gathered through personal contacts, each potential candidate was contacted by email and/or phone text. A cover letter was provided to each participant with the purpose and significance of the study and a brief background on the researcher. A letter of consent was provided to each participant. After one week with no response, a second request was sent using email and/or phone text. Sampling continued until a participant was identified that met the desired participant criteria.

The final four selected participants were chosen and each participant signed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent form (Appendix A). The IRB consent form provided to the participants included all of the required components as stated in statute (45 CFR 46.116).

The informed consent process included:

- Full disclosure about the research project and the role of the participant.
- Ensuring the potential participant has an acceptable understanding about the research project.
- Participant understanding it is a voluntary choice to participate in the study.

Once the IRB letters of consent had been returned, interview times were scheduled.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Process

Due to a small sample size of four African American women educational leaders as participants, a qualitative study using purposeful sampling was used. Purposeful sampling is used for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). The first step in using purposive sampling is to decide what criteria will be used to select participants of the study (Merriam, 2009). As a result, criteria purposeful sampling was used. The criteria for being a participant in the study included the following:

1. An African American woman
2. Has experience as a principal, assistant principal or superintendent
3. Is currently employed or has been employed in a school district in Minnesota
4. Has served in the leadership role of principal, assistant superintendent or superintendent for at least three years.

Four participants were selected according to their interest in the study, and included: two elementary principals, one secondary principal and one assistant superintendent.

A standardized, open interview method was used for the study, an approach that seeks meaning from the person being interviewed as the main goal of the interview process.

“Questionnaires and interviews are used extensively in educational research to collect data about phenomena that are not directly observable; inner experience, opinions, values, interests, and the like” (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007, p. 228). Standard open-ended interviews have the following characteristics (Patton, 2002, pp. 16-117):

- The exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance.
- All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order.
- Questions are worded in a completely open format.

A standardized and open-ended interview allows the researcher to easier analyze the data by ensuring all responses can be compared, and by increasing the comparability of responses (Ibid).

Probes were also used in the interview process. Probes are follow-up questions or comments to a question that has already been asked. This process was used when there was a possibility of more to be learned (Merriam, 2009).

An interview protocol (Appendix C) was created from the literature review and used during the interview process. The interview questions established were given to a test group to ensure the instrument was reliable. As a result of feedback received from the test group, improvements were made to the interview protocol.

Interviews were held face-to-face at a location of the participant's choosing. Interviews lasted between 60-90 minutes. The interview was recorded using an iPhone and the Audio Memo App. The audio records were saved into a password-secured Dropbox folder, as well as a password-secured external hard drive. The information that was collected was transcribed verbatim for coding by a transcriber for the principal investigator. Merriam (2009) states, "Ideally, verbatim transcription of recorded interviews provides the best database for analysis" (p. 110).

All final transcripts of the interviews were provided to each participant to make changes or additions as appropriate. Each final transcript was reviewed and coded in order to gain an understanding of each participant's story, by creating common themes identified from the literature review. Data was also analyzed to help answer the study's research questions. Participants were able to request a copy of the results of the study.

Summary

Chapter three described the study methodology. Examination of why a qualitative method was used and information on the format of the study design was shared. Information was provided on how participants were chosen for the study and how data was collected and analyzed. In the next chapter, the results of the study will be shared. Participants in the study will be described in detail. The reader will find the results of each research question and learn about the common themes of how each African American woman educational leader handled the impact of perceptions and stereotypes in their leadership practices.

Chapter IV: RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to examine society's perceptions and stereotypes about African American women in educational leadership roles and how race and gender issues impact African American women who work in Minnesota educational leadership practices. The study included two major concepts. First, the research reviewed African American women's educational leadership perspectives on common race/gender issues they have encountered as

leaders. Second, the findings of the study provide first steps for future African American women administrators in navigating the educational leadership role as a person of color and as a woman.

This chapter reports the findings of the study. The data were compiled and analyzed from the four participants who were interviewed. Data gathered were aligned to each specific research question.

Research Questions

A qualitative method, using a phenomenological approach, was employed in the study to provide a detailed account of the experiences of four African American women educational leaders, each employed by Minnesota schools. The study identified if the participants, while performing their roles as educational administrators, experienced race/gender issues in their jobs. A standardized, open interview method was used for the study. The specific research questions were:

1. What race/gender issues do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having impacted their leadership practices?
2. What strategies do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?
3. How have identified strategies of select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, assisted them in developing their leadership practices?

Description of the Sample

Through the use of purposeful sampling, four participants were selected to be involved in the study and met the following study criteria:

1. They were African American woman
2. They had experience as a principal, assistant superintendent or superintendent
3. They were currently employed or had been employed in a school district in Minnesota
4. They served in the leadership role of principal, assistant superintendent or superintendent for at least three years.

Table 2 provides a profile of each of the study's participant's years of experience.

Table 2. Participants' Years of Administrative Experience by Role & Grade Level

Participant Pseudonym Name	Total Years of Experience	Asst. Superintendent Experience	HS Principal Experience	MS Principal Experience	Elem Principal Experience
<i>Administrator #1: Bernice Jones</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Administrator #2: Diana Henderson</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>0</i>

<i>Administrator #3: Constance Johnson</i>	20	0	0	0	20
<i>Administrator #4: Mercedes Hughes</i>	17	0	2	0	15

Qualitative Results from Research Questions

Three research questions were used to guide this qualitative research study in examining how society's stereotypes and perceptions surrounding race/gender issues impact African American women's educational leadership practices. Research question one asked the participants to divulge if they had encountered any race/gender issues that impacted their roles as educational administrators.

Research Question One

What race/gender issues do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having impacted their leadership practices?

Each of the four African American woman educational administrators had several race/gender issues with which they reported they have had to contend during their careers as educational administrators. In the interviews, each participant responded to questions about difficult situations involving, or perceived as linked to, race and gender while performing their duties as educational administrators. These situations reported by participants, were categorized by the researcher into four common issues: authority and decision-making, imposed stereotypes, appeasement, and performance skepticism.

- *Authority and Decision-making.* Being challenged by staff and colleagues when making decisions in their administrative roles

- *Imposed Stereotypes.* Experiencing stereotypes and negative images about being an African American and a woman
- *Appeasement.* A perception that they needed to change who they were in order to appease others
- *Performance Skepticism.* A perception that they needed to prove themselves in their roles as African American women educational administrators

Authority and Decision-making. In their educational administrative roles, all of the four educational administrators felt their authority as an African American woman educational leader was challenged by both men and women. Bernice Jones stated regarding her authority being challenged:

And therefore I do have authority, and what that means is that anything that goes into the schools I serve, I should at least know about it, but I actually pay attention probably more than what people are used to, and so they get very offended when I tell them, “No,” if that makes sense, so like I pay attention to curriculum, I pay attention to professional development, I pay attention to what happens to support staff, and if I feel that it may have a negative impact, I speak up, and I have found more and more people who are not black, but white females who have tried to take me to task, and I’ve had to say, “I need to meet with you one-on-one so we can talk,” and I’ve had to do that -- in my third year now, I’ve had to do that at least seven times just in the three years of the position that I’m in, and I haven’t had to do that as a principal. I thought -- I was trying really hard not to think it was race, but I haven’t seen anyone else go through that until we got another counterpart who’s a person of color. She’s not a black female, but she’s a person of color, and she’s now gone through the same things I’ve gone through, but no one else has. None of the white males, none of the white females, so I believe that it’s about authority, I believe it’s about people who have thought that I don’t mind my place.

Constance Johnson believed, in response to facing a difficult situation in her role involving race/gender issues, she cited a situation with an underperforming teacher:

I’ll tell you, when I tried to release a non-tenured teacher within my first or second year here, and I looked at the behavior of the teacher and went that’s totally unacceptable: you are yelling at children every day; you’re degrading children every day; you’ve got children who are sitting outside your classroom, so they have no access to an education; you’ve got them plunked all around the outside of the room, and they don’t have the

same opportunities as everyone else. And so come time to either fish or cut bait, it was, like, you need to go. Oh, and challenging, challenging, challenging.

Johnson was asked if she felt the account was because she was an African American. She responded, “Yes, because the teacher did not challenge the principal who was here before me who was a white female.”

In responding to questions on difficult situations in their jobs, all of the African American women educational administrators related that gender also played a large role as they navigated challenging situations in their careers. Constance Johnson reflected on the role of a male in the same situation:

If I would have been a male principal, [the teacher] would not have challenged me. Would not have. Brought in the union folks as well, which I’m fine with that; if you want someone else to listen to what my rationale is, that’s fine, but I just basically said everything that you were asking me about for your dismissal is all in your evaluations, and I did find out that after every evaluation that we met about, she took and shredded her evaluation, so she had no copy of it at all. And so I had addressed how she treated students, how she was basically eliminating students from any education, and it was of no consequence to her, but bottom line is, you can yell as loud as you want, but you’re still going.

Johnson further reflected on being challenged by a male teacher in her role as a woman administrator.

... [T]here are things that I say in general that if a male principal said and did, they would be taken a totally different way. For example, at my last staff meeting, I had one of my male teachers that kind of was back-chatting me at the meeting, and I was trying to answer his question, and he kind of physically dismissed me at the meeting; that wouldn’t have happened with a male principal. And yet, I also have to look at; is this the hill I’m going to die on?

Mercedes Hughes’ reflections delved into being challenged as a female leader who is also a person of color:

Coming into a building where they’ve never had a person of color as a leader, or a female as a leader, as a principal, has been very unique and very challenging. Having to have conversations with white men has been very challenging, being a person of color. Had a white guy who comes from a military background, his family; very rigid; whole group

teaching, and that's how he learned, and that's the only thing he's going to do. Very rigid at turning over little black boy's desks, and then when approached and called on, his response was, well, see by the end of October, beginning of November, they'll know my discipline policy and how I run my class.

And so just having to have that conversation with him, it was very uncomfortable because, not just as a woman in general and having to deal with staff who had never had to really interact with a person of color as a leader, let alone a female, it was quite interesting because he thought that I was too assertive, too abrasive; he didn't like how I addressed him; he didn't like the way I approached him.

When asked to discuss the intersectionality of race and gender and its role in influencing the African American women educational administrators' leadership practices, Diana Henderson did not view race as separate from gender, but instead, felt the two roles were inseparable. Diana Henderson stated:

You know, at times I shave my head, because the hard part for me, and I totally get it -- it's like you're a woman. I'm sorry, when I walk into a room, they're gonna see I'm black before they see I'm a woman anyway, so to say that I can't -- you want me to leave my identity and who I am as a black woman and say, "What does it mean to be a woman?" I'm gonna be honest with you. (Name stated) has no frickin' clue what does it mean to be me. We may be women, but you know what? You still have privilege, you still benefit from all -- you have men who will come along and say, "Hey, how can I help you?" Because they see you as this weak thing, which we're not seen that way, and so when I think about -- I can't separate the two. I'm just gonna be honest with you.

Imposed Stereotypes. Confronting perceived notions and stereotypes about Black women was a difficult issue for all of the African American women educational administrators in their careers. Bernice Jones shared her thoughts on society's perceptions about those skills an African American woman brings to a position and on the preconceived notion on how African Americans speak:

Again, only in those perceptions and those barriers of others who put that on you, so I know when I walk into a room based on historical encounters that there is a perception of what I can bring to the table. I know that having since moved to Minnesota my first years of teaching, people's comments to me were, "Oh, you're so articulate. Oh, I think that you really surprised me by how you have a command of the English language." Another comment was, "Oh, why don't you just teach African American literature?" I'm actually more versed in Shakespeare and canon lit and not African American lit by

training. I just know it, and what I had to do was ask other teachers was that common language that I was hearing, and they said, “Yes,” and these other teachers were white teachers who said the comments I was hearing is how people spoke of those who were people of color who were teachers. And I said, “But that seems so stupid. One, I speak English, I’m not bilingual, but, two, English literature is what I teach, so why would that response be, “You have a command of the English literature -- or English language,” be said, when what other language should I speak? So, I think that the perception is in other people’s mind of any deficits that they think an African American female can bring, because I was raised that I’m the whole package.

Constance Johnson stated:

If you don’t tell people what you’re about, they assume what you’re about, and what they assume what you’re about is usually wrong. I find the more I communicate with people, the more they understand where I’m coming from, and they don’t make up their own stories.

With regard to stereotypes, every participant noted without prompting, that they had concerns around being labeled an “angry Black woman” (or ABW). Diana Henderson stated:

Cause I can’t be that angry. I can’t be -- what is it? ABW? I can’t be the ABW. I can’t be the angry Black woman, ‘cause even if I were White I could be angry. Cause I’m justified in my anger, ‘cause you know what? I got that White guilt. Oh, I’m just doing this for the cause. You know, it’s the liberal crap that I can’t stand. Don’t be liberal, be right. Don’t tell me, “Oh, I understand,” no. Walk a mile in my shoes, and let’s talk about -- you want to go shopping with me? You want to walk in the building and have them say, “Oh, I thought the woman up front was the principal,” and they’re talking about my White AP. “No, I’m the principal.” “Oh, you’re the principal?” Even Black people are surprised when I’m the principal.

Bernice Jones shared another example of fighting the stereotype of being an angry Black woman:

Yes, I’m considered that I speak too harshly, that I’m a barrier between people getting to my schools, and I know that I exhibit if not the same, less of those kind of attributes than my White female counterparts, and that’s not said about them. They’re considered movers and shakers, and I actually brought this up, that I noticed that one of my counterparts, she was able to get certain programs for her schools, and I was told no. I could be told, “No” a dozen times, but when my schools are not provided the resources they need that’s an issue.

In offering concluding comments about the ABW issue, the data reflected that all four of the administrators had to fight the perception they were ABW when, in fact, they were challenging their colleagues about doing the right thing for students.

Gender provided its own stereotypes and perceptions for the African American women educational administrators. Each spoke to the need to refrain from being or appearing overemotional and weak. Constance Johnson stated:

Disadvantage would be because a lot of times, they don't take women seriously. Because it's kind of like it's, you know, the good old boys club, and you feel that often. And the disadvantage is when you want to be assertive and speak up, then you're being too abrasive or you're being disrespectful, but then if you don't speak up, then you're being just the opposite, you know what I'm saying?

Appeasement. Diana Henderson stated the difficulty in being herself without in turn being labeled an ABW or other stereotype. She learned to tailor her behavior to expectations:

Not that I wanted staff to like me, but it was like I wanted to do what was right by kids, but I don't need people to hang me out to dry, so I became more conscientious about how I did business and the whole, you know, I could only be so much me before they'd say, "Oh, you're just this angry black woman," so I was intentional. It was like, "No, maybe, maybe not," but as I got older I said, "Forget it. I'm so done," and I think of a situation in [district]. My little man of a boss -- didn't like him -- appeared to be, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, but when the rubber hit the road, it was about what the white folks were saying, what the staff was saying, and I needed to change who I needed to be to make sure they felt good about who they were.

Each African American woman educational administrator commented on the need to change who they were in order to make others feel comfortable around them. Some examples included changing the tone of their voice, and even changing how potential statements were worded. Mercedes Hughes remarked on being challenged about correcting a staff members' behavior that was harming children:

I felt as an African-American, it was almost, as I said, it was attacking my character and who I am as a person and as a woman. Because to say that I was abrasive, assertive, it wasn't any of that; it was just calling him out on some behavior that had never been challenged before. But what I found is that, especially my first year here, that in this

particular building -- and not just this building, but even in other schools that I've been in when dealing with White folk, you have to almost -- I hate to use the word "code switch" or change who you are in terms of how you want to express an issue just to appease them.

Hughes further reflected on the need to make others feel good around an African

American woman:

Now, when I first started out, I did that, but now that I've been in the game a long time, I ain't doing it anymore because the kids need someone that's going to stand up and advocate for them. And so it's so frustrating to have to, as a person of color when you know you have to deal with something negative, you know, you're sitting there and in your mind, trying to figure out, okay, how do I say this; do I talk like really low, you know? How do I say it? And so that gets to be overwhelming after awhile, and I said that I'm sick of having to deny who I am to appease them. I'm not doing it anymore.

Hughes further spoke to her appearance, regarding the need to deny who she was to fit in:

One of the things I'd say as an African-American, okay, before I cut off all my hair, I used to have puff hair -- and this is deep right here. And when I would go on job interview -- and I started wearing my hair like in a natural style, but maybe the last three years, maybe four years, but one of the things is I make sure that I look a certain way. For example, I just feel like -- it's not a strategy, but it's something, and I'm hoping it helps - - it's about that appearance again. I feel that we have to look a certain way in order to even be -- for white folk to feel comfortable even working with us or around us. For example, I felt like my big puff -- I felt that if I would have come on the interview -- I wore a wig. With a big puff like I like to wear my hair, you guys probably would have been afraid of me, thinking I was too much black power, it's not necessarily a strategy, but it is something that I have to be cognizant of, and talking to other colleagues, we talk about that, having to make sure that we come looking appropriately and ready.

Performance Skepticism. A common theme among the African American educational administrators, along with fighting perceptions and stereotypes and the in turn felt pressure to appease, was the need to prove themselves. This was stated in various forms: a constant need to validate their work, to always "go the extra miles" were examples given by the administrators.

To this, Constance Johnson said the following:

I think the expectations for a female administrator is a lot -- the expectation is very, very high; I think the expectations are actually higher for females than they are for males because sometimes I feel like just the presence of an adult male principal would just rectify the situation, whereas I need to prove that I have solved the situation, and you get

the people that say, well, you just get too emotional about this, and it's like it has nothing to do with being emotional about it, it comes down to right or wrong. So I've really had to change even my tone of delivery with things so that it's perfectly calm and neutral, and you have to make sure that you check your emotions at the door, and even with phone calls, I have to make sure that I am stating things that are very neutral and not raise my voice, whereas I think a male principal would get by with kind of putting people in their place.

Bernice Jones noted regarding the felt need to validate her work:

...I feel that as an African American I was raised that life will be twice as hard, so just deal with it, and what I mean by that is that I need to be on my p's and q's. I need to make sure I'm educated, have experiences. The pathway that I've gone through is to lend credibility to my work, so I purposely moved to Minnesota, to Minneapolis to learn more about urban education.

Diana Henderson stated similar thoughts on the need to perform better than her fellow colleagues, to be seen as equal.

Yeah, we have to be better than most. I mean, we have to be 10% more, 10% more, and we have to produce more in order to prove that, yeah, we're better than the rest. The advantage of that, when you produce, they leave you alone, 'cause if you're producing they'll leave you alone. If you're not producing they're gonna be in your business and ask you why aren't you producing even though you're producing just as much as the other 90 White people that are in the same position that you're in, but you ain't bothering them.

Further comments on proving oneself was offered by Henderson:

The only disadvantage, as I said, I think, is making sure that people take you seriously, and the other piece is you have to always come with your A game; you have to always be prepared and be ahead of them, i.e., if I'm -- like today, we had a PD. If I have to make sure I understand what guided reading is, what Café is. I can't, you know, I can't BS because they're going to call me on it; they want to make sure that we know our stuff, whereas the White cute ones can come in and just be cute and don't have a brain in her head or his head. And there's a difference, man, and that's been our life; you have to come with your A game and be ahead of the game and know your stuff, your T's are crossed and I's are dotted.

Mercedes Hughes reflected similar thoughts around combating stereotypes. She reflected:

The stereotypes would be being loud, making sure we enunciate our words, making sure that I'm at meetings on time, and when I come to meetings on time, making sure that I'm prepared, making sure I send out the agendas ahead of time. See, other people can do that, but we can't. Just in even how we dress. White folk can dress, look like a bag of

potatoes and still be heard; we have to come dressed a certain -- you know, looking professional at all times whenever you step before a group of people for them to even take you seriously because if not, you know, they'll shut down on you. See, there's many stereotypes.

Advantages and Disadvantages of being African American, Woman and Administrator

During the interviews with the African American women educational administrators, where race and gender issues impacting their leadership practices were discussed, a picture was provided of the advantages and disadvantages of being an African American and a woman in an educational leadership position. The data collected are reflected in Table 3.

Table 3. Advantages and Disadvantages of Being an Administrator, African American (AA) and Woman

	...of being a Woman administrator	...of being an AA administrator
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Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women think of the A and B (multiple perspectives); think of humanity and the social emotional intelligence it takes to get a project done. • Job security-good rate females are not a dime a dozen • Better understanding of child development • Natural nurturers because of parenting and mothering • It is easy for women to be caring and loving towards people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parallels with being a female • Families of color will listen to African American administrators more; they feel comfortable with them • Natural affinity with AA clientele and staff. African American administrators can advocate for students of color; parents know they have an advocate in them
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative perceptions of the strengths women bring to leadership • Butting up against the glass ceiling • Trying to find balance when trying to do it all (i.e. mom, administration, etc.) • Things that women say are taken in a different way than if a man said the same thing • Perception that as a woman they are not taken as seriously as a man • Perception that being assertive is being abrasive • If women don't speak up, women can be seen as disrespectful and overlooked or gullible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African Americans have to produce the evidence about their worth and their skills • Have to work around the perceptions and barriers that are put on African American administrators • Have to be better than most other administrators • African American administrators are few and far between. Every meeting they go into, they're solo and expected to answer on every group in society • People not taking African American educators seriously; they always have to come with their "A game"

Research question two delved into gathering information on the strategies the African American women administrators employed in addressing the race and gender issues they encountered in their roles as leaders. This information was deemed important to identify the various strategies these leaders employed to address their situations.

Research Question Two

What strategies do select African American women school administrators, who work in Minnesota, report they have identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?

The four African American educational administrators shared multiple strategies they used to address the race/gender issues they encountered in their positions. These issues were unveiled in research question one, as: (1) authority and decision-making being challenged, (2) imposed stereotypes, (3) forced appeasement and (4) undergoing performance skepticism. Some examples of the strategies they reported were very specific: confronting others who treated them in a condescending manner, and/or making sure they were knowledgeable and well prepared when presenting information. While these clearly stated strategies helped to answer research question two (see Table 3), more obscure strategies were collected and categorized by way of the participants reflecting on their decision-making process and how those decisions were influenced by them being a female and/or being an African American. In this regard, thematic words and phrases arose when participants discussed their decision-making and strategies. The researcher has categorized these words and phrases into the following general decision-making categories: (1) collaboration and communication, (2) data and research, (3) nurture and kid-driven thinking, and (4) exposing stereotypes.

The following interview excerpts exemplify these emerged, overarching strategies used by study participants, when addressing issues related to being woman and, or African American.

Collaboration and Communication. Diana Henderson commented on the need for collaboration, feedback and honoring the staff's work when making decisions.

...especially when it comes to professional development, I really rely on my instructional coach to fill that pulse of PLCs. "And yes, we're gonna disagree at times,

but also being able to say, “Okay, these are my ideas and letting people take ‘em and say, ‘this is what we heard you say’. It’s not about my plan, and so my decision-making is all about feedback I hear and see in classrooms and I hear from staff. So my decisionmaking it’s, it’s, you know, think about the compass. It’s emotional, it’s intellectual, it’s moral, it’s relationship. I use all of those facets to make my decision, ‘cause if I’m only thinking about it, then I’m gonna hurt -- it’s not about hurting someone, but I’m gonna push people over the edge, and they become nonfunctional for my kids, so all my decisions are based on what’s best for my kids, and if I do what’s best for the kids, I’m gonna do what’s best for the adults.

To the theme of being collaborative, Mercedes Hughes commented:

I am, I believe, into the team approach, collaboration because no man is an island, and if you really want to move an initiative forward, you’ve got to have -- I don’t want to say buy-in, I don’t care about buy-in, but a voice. You’ve got to have a thick -- you’ve got to have voices from your staff. I’m not a dictator; I am more of a charismatic, transformational, collaborative leader.

Data and Research. Bernice Jones commented on her decision-making process being data-based:

I make sure that I use data. I try to bring others to the table to make that decision. I would say that I don’t have like a formal way you would want to call it, but I make sure that I have gone through a stakeholder process, so I’ll pick, for example, principal PD and if they’re looking to work more equity, and if they’re looking to be equitable leaders, so what I do is I use data to show that the practices are in their schools based on students, but also based on surveys from staff.

Nurture and Kid-driven thinking. The influence of being a female played a part in the decision-making process for three of the administrators. The influence of being a mother, being empathetic and being able to create a positive culture for students were seen as being influenced by being a woman. Hughes further commented on how being a mother affected her decisionmaking practices.

... because I’m a mother; very empathetic about people, especially kids, but also, it’s very much so because of, I think as women. We’re more relational, where men are more positional. It’s about power. What kind of job do you have? I don’t care about that. It’s more about the relationship, and so I think because of the make-up of a female, a lot of my decisions are depending on -- but if it’s something that’s going to hurt kids, I don’t care, I’m going to call it out, but ultimately, I think my decisions are about keeping a positive climate and culture in school, and that ties into developing those relationships.

...Now, I am very vocal; I'm not afraid to call out injustices, but it's after I've done my research. But I will say this, if I see something that teachers are doing that's just inappropriate and just a deficit to student learning, something on the inside of me won't allow me to just sit back and not say anything. And I don't know if it's because of the struggle that as a person of color you go through, and you see these kids, knowing that if I don't stand up and advocate for them, they would never have a chance.

Bernice Jones commented on the role of being a mom and caretaker and the use of speaking in story to help develop an understanding for others on how past history connects to the present. This story-telling process has helped her form her decision-making process.

I often speak in stories, which I believe is a cultural piece to speak in stories and connections. But I also speak as a mom, so I can't speak as a dad 'cause I'm not one, but I speak as a mom and how I'm raising my three girls. And I use examples of what I expect out of them in their life, of how I think people should look at all students, and I believe that that heavily influences that, because I was raised by a single mom. So I also try to show outliers of statistics, because historically we hear that if a child is raised by a single mom all the things that they will miss, and I was raised that I can have whatever I wanted, and so what I try to help people understand in that process of is do you know what the vision is for that child? And the answer is no, 'cause you never asked, but then too you should be giving them one, so I feel that heavily influences the way that I speak, walk, and make decisions.

Mercedes Hughes reflected:

I think it comes from the journey of being marginalized, second guessed, and questioned about -- you really do that? And so that puts me in a space of, okay, now I gotta prove to you, now I'm gonna have to have the conversation, now I'm gonna have to spout this, this, and that. Because white culture says if you have a degree you need to talk about your degree. You need to talk about the articles that you read. You need to talk about that you went to the Harvard Institute for Women, and you need to talk about this, whereas we are so communal, it's not about our degrees. We're so action driven, we're so relational driven, we're so -- it's like I believe in you because of what you can do, not because I read an article that said you could possibly do that, and our life experiences have shown that, and so, I mean, I think just how I do business with my kids.

Exposing Stereotypes. The influence of being an African American on the participants' decision-making was evident. Bernice Jones responded on her decision-making process due to her lived experiences and the need to combat stereotypes.

Oh, well, for me, so I first try to make sure that I tell people that I do not speak for all African people and kids just because I'm Black. Because I don't know all black experiences. However, based on historical narratives of what students tell me, of what adults tell me, that my story is still relevant, so I make decisions based on growing up in single parent household as an African American female by an African American mom. I help people understand that that is supposed to have some outcomes, positive and negative. You know, like you didn't have a dad, so you're going to be promiscuous and I'm not. So making sure that people understand how you can counteract stereotypes, but how you can use some of those as the basis for building up assets for young people. So if I'm raising three African American females who have a dad and I didn't, what asset is that giving them? They still need to know my story, because there's strength in that. But I try to give that to other educators so that they know -- take the time to figure out the narrative of at least a cohort of your students so that when you make decisions you make it on that cohort and not on that parent who is complaining about the decision you made.

Each African American woman educational administrator identified very specific strategies they had developed to maneuver and challenge race/gender issues in their roles as administrators. Table 4 reflects the strategies used by each administrator to combat race related issues and gender related issues.

Table 4. Specific Strategies Stated by Administrators as used to Combat Race/Gender Issues

Strategies used to combat race issues	Strategies used to combat gender issues
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preface statements-inform people conversation will be about race • Be a courageous leader on equity; get training • Hold conversations about race • Prayer • Find women of color within the context of the business to lean on for guidance, especially African American women • Clear and frequent communication • Appearance- need to look appropriate and ready; need to look a certain way to make others comfortable (i.e. hair, etc.) • Be 2 to 10 steps ahead • Make split-second decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection and mediation • Reminding self of why they chose the field • Do homework and research • Create a leadership team • Get feedback; seek staff input • Be an analytical thinker • Be very transparent • Be upfront with vision and expectations • Change plan if needed • Have multiple solutions to everything • Look at the big picture • Prayer • Think outside of the box • Focus on their building and responsibilities • Recognize others
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Research question three gathered information about the identified strategies that were found in research question two and examined how these strategies further helped develop the participants' leadership practices.

Research Question Three

How have identified strategies of select African American women school administrators, who work in Minnesota, assisted them in developing their leadership practices?

In each interview the participants were asked to reflect on the motivating factors that brought them into the field of educational administration, to share their vision as a leader and the experiences that helped form their vision as a leader. Each was asked to describe their leadership style, particularly as an African American female educational leader. The data gathered provided further background and detail on how each educational administrator developed the

strategies identified in research question two to address race/gender issues that they had encountered in their profession.

Participants' Leadership Styles

The educational administrators shared strategies of building empowerment in their staffs and students, the strategies of being driven by their purpose to make positive changes in the world, the importance of building relationships and clearly communicating their visions to others.

When forming their visions, the need to make changes and the need to make things better were evident with each educational administrator. Bernice Jones shared her vision of empowering staff and students to grow and change the system for the better. Jones said:

My vision as a leader is to empower students and staff to understand their strengths, and to massage it so that they can be the best that they can be. So that is how I lead; that is my vision. It's about empowerment. Like, we had PD today. I feel like I'm trying to build capacity, so that's another -- I'm about building capacity. So my vision is to empower and to provide the skills for teachers and students to be able to do the work so that when money goes away -- just building capacity, train the trainer model, I think that is more powerful because peers will listen to peers, students will listen to students, and it's been very successful. Like, when the kids come down, we talk about student voice.

Constance Johnson supported Jones' statement and added the importance of the need for leaders to understand the role that relationships play when supporting your vision.

My vision as a leader is -- I want education and life to work for people. I treat my staff, and I tell them, I said I want to treat you as I would want to be treated, and I treat the kids as if they were all special. They're all special to me. They mean something to me, and I think a big part of my vision is knowing that we have to have relationships with each other before we can grow together. You have to know people before you can grow people.

Bernice Jones noted that she wanted to, through her leadership practices, show others that you can be whatever you want. She reflected:

So my vision -- my goal when I came here was to be a role model with possibilities, so I feel like I'm doing that on a kid level, and I hear from other colleagues that I'm doing that on an adult level, and then what's way more important to me is on a mom level that

I'm showing that you can have whatever you want, and then work can be like super crazy, but if you're committed to what you want to do, then that's okay.

There were many motivating factors and people who played a role in helping study participants form their visions and leadership practices. These sources included colleagues, families and spirituality. Jones shared information on the role models who helped form who she is today. She stated:

So one is my mom, because she taught me that if I hear the word "no" I'm talking to the wrong person, and so I'm always supposed to just ask, "Is there somebody else I can talk to?" One of them is my track coach. Her name is [Name stated], and she was built like a linebacker and all her brothers were. And her brothers went to our school, and she was just this beautiful woman, but like, so disciplined, so strong, and she used to drive beside us while we ran. She used to make me so sick for that, but I learned discipline, I learned teamwork, and I learned commitment. And then I would say that I live in a matriarch kind of family. All the women are really strong, and they teach you like with their husbands, that independence of you can be a partner, but you still have to have a sense of self, and you have to have your own path, and you have to give back to the community, so you can't waste your talents, and you can't play stupid. You're not allowed to play dumb. If you know it, say you know it.

Jones was able to develop her leadership practices by displaying herself as a strong and disciplined educational administrator who gives back to her community. Her role models played a critical part in forming her leadership practices. Educators played a role in motivating Bernice Jones to become an administrator and create a vision that affected the lives of others in a positive manner. From Jones' childhood to adulthood, people believed in her and encouraged her to do more with her life. The life experiences of Bernice Jones resulted in her using these experiences to form her leadership practices, and focus on her passion to help children and adults. She further stated:

I also know that my own educational experience, who made a difference for me was in middle school. It was Mr. Sweeney, a white guy in science. Turned me on to science. That had an impact on me. My fifth grade teacher, Ms. Thornton had an impact. Yeah, I was Chatty Cathy, but she pulled me aside and just said, "You have so much potential. You are a leader. I love what you want to talk about, but can you talk about it when I'm not --." But she was real with me, but honored me, and so I had people insert themselves

in my life and when it came time to say, “What do you want to do as your vocation?” Not the career, because, you know, careers come and go. But what do you want to invest your life in. And it’s like I want to invest my life in kids. And when I started teaching, I was like, “Wow,” you know, this is fine, you know, you’re with kids, and then I realized -- something happened where I had to be principal for a day or AP, I realized if I impact 150 kids. As a secondary person you have anywhere from 150 to 160 kids. If I do that, if I become an administrator, I get to two teachers, that’s 300 kids. If I get three teachers, that’s 450 kids. I get to half of my teachers, I have the potential to impact my entire building by just reaching those adults. And so what motivates me are the children, but propelling adults into believing that they can have an impact on children’s lives, even if they didn’t go into the business to impact children’s lives.

Support for, and the forming of, their leadership styles wasn’t always acquired from educators.

Diana Henderson shared her experiences with support from non-educators. Henderson reflected:

You know, I’m gonna be honest. How I think about school and how I think about what I do, it comes from watching. And it doesn’t come from watching educators. It comes from watching almost like I think about Coach K at Duke. Just how he’s driven for excellence, and his high expectations. Granted I know he loves his guys, but sometimes he doesn’t show it real well. But Tony Dungy, and I look at people and I’m like they went to places that fueled them and vet them and supported their belief system. As long as I’m in that space, I’m gold. If I’m not in that space, then I gotta find that space, and I learned that from reading his “Quiet Storm” book, that when he went to Tampa it was because -- he was drawn to Tampa because of ownership and what they wanted to do for the men. He was driven by the men, not football, but by the men and changing men, and then he ended up in Indianapolis, because he wanted to change men and have an impact on those men. Football mattered, but it was about the men, and coming from a Christian perspective, God calls us to a higher calling than just having a successful building. He calls us to change lives, so something will be different in the future.

From basketball, Henderson was able to develop her leadership practice to include excellence and high expectations. Her experiences assisted her in building leadership selfawareness skills (Showry & Mansa, 2014), including finding her calling and a vision for her work in educational leadership.

As the participants shared the development of their vision as leaders and those life experiences that played a critical role in developing strategies that had helped them address race/gender issues, their leadership styles were evidenced in specific adjectives. Table 5 lists each of the African American educational administrators’ stated leadership style descriptions.

Table 5. Participants' Description of their Leadership Style

Administrator	Statements on Personal Leadership Style
#1 Bernice Jones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic • Passionate • Transformative
#2 Diana Henderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schizoid, a little crazy • Compassionate • Highly Demanding <p>“What I demand of myself, I demand of others, including kids.”</p>
#3 Constance Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be the change you want to see • Fair • Tell staff life happens <p>“We have a job to do; we don't need to take ourselves so seriously”</p>
#4 Mercedes Hughes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting and empowering others to do the work • Implementation

After the participants were asked about their influential experiences on vision and the development of their leadership style, they were asked how they would describe their leadership style as an African American woman educational administrator. In each of the participants' responses, a powerful undertone was evidenced: a passion and commitment to children, particularly children of color and a commitment to portray Black women in a positive light.

Table 6 states the leadership styles, as described by each participant, when considered in regard to race and gender issues.

Table 6. Participants' Leadership Styles When Considering Race and Gender Issues

Administrator	Statements on Leadership Style
#1 Bernice Jones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rely on belief system and portray self as a strong, woman educational administrator • Stay committed to my leadership vision • Exhibit self as grounded and centered for educating people • Carry myself proudly and respond to issues with confidence
#2 Diana Henderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be overcommitted to a project when working towards a vision
#3 Constance Johnson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be committed to helping those in need; the underdog • Be the equity police; work towards equity for all • Always be honest, especially with parents
#4 Mercedes Hughes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your steps; be bold and courageous in fighting for your students' needs • Be respectful to all that you work with • Be a transformational leader; motivate and inspire others to do better • Work with each situation in a caring manner • As a Black woman, stay true to myself; as you work use your lived experiences to help others

The study provided the reader with qualitative information on the lived experiences of four African American women educational administrators. The data revealed strategies that each administrator used as they were addressing race/gender issues in their jobs. As they shared these personal experiences, each participant was asked, “What advice would you give future African

American women educational administrators?” A tone of understanding regarding the challenges future African American women educational administrators may have to experience was expressed; some answers displayed a tone of passion and commitment, and some responses revealed a tone of tiredness. Several administrators advised on the importance of being yourself.

Bernice Jones stated:

Know yourself. Know what you want. Why are you here? You have to have a cohort of friends to vent to, so you can speak your truth without grace. So we always hear, “Speak your truth with grace,” so we want to speak it without grace. But you also need them to plan for your next moves, and then the biggest part is to me, know what your like end game is. Like this is my job now, but I actually have a career in mind of what I want to do after this. These are all stepping stones, and so you should know what you want to get out of it, because otherwise you’re just existing day to day. And for some people that’s cool, but you have to have a sense of purpose so that when someone comes and challenges that you can speak to that. Otherwise, you’ll fall for anything.

Constance Johnson’s reflection supported Jones’ comments..

Be grounded in who you are. Be okay with who you are. Don’t let anybody change who you are. Learn as you go through your journey. Grow from your journey, but your morals, your beliefs, who you are, and who you are as an African American female in leadership need to be consistent no matter where you go.

Advice was given to future African American women educational administrators about the need to always put their best foot forward. Diana Henderson shared:

Stay the course and don’t let the uglies get you down because they’re going to try to chip away at you every chance they can. Know what you’re about, but always stand in the gap for kids because if you’re about kids. They can’t call you wrong. Be passionate about what you do, and always, always put your best foot forward. Because our kids deserve it. If you want to affect the future, you’ve got to do the work now. Our future isn’t going to just happen; we have to be a part of it. We have to be a part of it now.

Mercedes Hughes further advised that future leaders keep a support circle. She reflected:

Exactly what was given to me: be true to yourself, always be prepared. The other piece is make sure you center yourself around people that you can trust. So as a leader, one of the things I’ve done is I’ve been intentional about creating an admin team for myself that I can go to and I can trust; it doesn’t have to be another administrator. And so if indeed you’re going to be a part of this team, then you have to be able to -- loyalty is important to me when you’re that close to me. You can’t be that close to me and then I feel that

you're a snake and I can't trust you; then you can't be a part of that inner circle team. So I would tell the new administrators to -- everything that was told to me, but also, make sure you center yourself or bring people on board that you can trust, and know they have your back. As a person of color, you've got to have allies; you've got to have allies. And my allies are not necessarily always a black person; my allies have been a lot of white people, to be very honest with you.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study were not intended to generalize the experiences of all Minnesotan African American educational administrators. Rather, this study was designed to share a sample of the lived experiences and opinions of four African American educational administrators as they navigated race/gender issues in their roles as administrators.

The findings in the study revealed that although each participant's story was related and understood as an individual, several commonalities were found in the lived experiences of the four African American women educational administrators. Stereotypes and perceptions concerning race and gender played a factor in each woman's experience. These two findings support Collins' (2009) Black Feminist Theory and Creswell's (2007) Critical Race Theory examined during the review of the literature. In turn, the manner in which each of the participating educational administrators made their decisions and developed their leadership practices were shared from their own individual perspective and not from the stories of others. Chapter four has provided the results of the study. In chapter five the summary of the findings from the study will be shared, along with limitations in the study and future recommendations to the field of educational administration.

Chapter V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (Adichie,

2009). African American women have faced multiple racial and gender challenges in their lives (Murthda & Watts, 2005). The intersectionality of race and gender makes living at the already existing intersection of multiple identities even more difficult (Collins, 2000). The study found that the managing of these roles and the challenges of society's perceptions and stereotypes about African American women did in fact make a large impact on the African American women educational administrator participants' leadership practices.

Regarding the role of administrative leadership within literature, the voice of the African American woman is seldom reported. Historically, issues related to leadership coupled with gender and race have not shared the experiences of African American women (Kochamba & Murray, 2000; Dunlap & Schmuck, 1995). Most of the current research conducted on leadership focuses on the White male leadership model (Parker, 2005). A limited amount of research was found on how perceptions of and stereotypes about African American women impact their leadership practices.

The purpose of the study was to examine the manner in which perceptions of and stereotypes about African American women impact their leadership practices. Four African American women educational administrators who work in school districts in Minnesota were asked to reflect on race/gender challenges in their roles as educational leaders. The findings of this study provide some first steps for future African American women leaders in navigating the role of an educational administrator as an African American and as a woman. The research questions for the study were:

1. What race/gender issues do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having impacted their leadership practices?

2. What strategies do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?
3. How have identified strategies of select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, assisted them in developing their leadership practices?

This chapter includes a summary of the findings, the conclusions reached on each of the three research questions, implications of the study and recommendations for future researchers.

Discussion on Findings

This qualitative study provided space and time to tell the story of four African American women educational administrators who work in Minnesota as they experienced their roles as educational leaders. Storytelling as defined by National Storytelling Association (1997):

A story is more generally agreed to be a specific structure of narrative with a specific style and set of characters and which includes a sense of completeness. Through this sharing of experience we use stories to pass on accumulated wisdom, beliefs and values. Through stories we explain how things are, why they are and our role and purpose. Stories are the building blocks of knowledge, the foundation of memory and learning. Stories connect us with our humanness and link past, present and future by teaching us to anticipate the possible consequences of our actions. (Section 1)

From the interviews and the sharing of their lived experiences, each participant disclosed their standpoint as an African American woman educational administrator facing race/gender issues. The sharing of these stories allowed the participants to express their beliefs and values and in turn permits the reader to gain knowledge and multiple perspectives in order to better understand the various struggles that African American women educational administrators experience daily.

The emergent themes derived from the four administrators' shared stories, helped to form a collective perspective. This perspective was in contrast to existing portrayals of African American women that reflect bias perspectives and stereotypes in society. As stated in the literature review, Collin's (2009) stated the importance of the need for Black women to use stories that have been shaped by their experiences to produce different realities from those that have been created by society.

Commonalities and collective themes were found in the experiences of the African American women educational administrators related to race/gender issues. When the study participants shared race/gender challenges they had encountered in their positions, the challenge of opposing society's labels that have been attached to African American women were consistent. All of the participants shared the need to fight the stereotype of being labeled an angry Black woman (ABW). The participants were able to provide perspectives on why they felt this image was current in society. The educational administrators in this study shared the common experience that when they were adamant in doing what was best for kids, when they were strong in working towards getting the resources necessary for their schools, and when they addressed poor teaching, each were viewed as abrasive and too strong. In other words, when working for social justice, the women leaders were seen as combative. As stated in the literature review, history reveals African American women consistently working for social justice and toward overcoming barriers. History also demonstrates that African American women educational leaders link the struggle/s for education with social justice, acting within a moral imperative (Murtadha and Watts, 2005).

From their personal perceptions of being marginalized and challenged with the constant need to prove themselves as an African American woman educational administrator, grew the

passion to provide students, particularly students of color, with an equitable education and opportunities. All of the participants commented on needing to be more knowledgeable and more skilled than their counterparts. They experienced pressure to not only “be on top of their game,” but “ahead of the game” in order to be seen worthy of their administrative positions. Race and gender issues were intertwined into their daily lives.

One of the tenets of Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) is the permanence of racism—where racism is seen as a norm and is the common everyday experience of people of color. This tenet aligned with the administrators’ stories. The women found racial stereotypes were applied to them from both men and women, and Blacks and Whites. How the African American women educational administrators looked, talked and made decisions came into question by others. These challenges could not always be easily be credited to being an African American or a woman. The intersectionality (Collins, 2009) of race and gender at times made it difficult for the women to judge whether or not a certain challenging situation was due to their being an African American or a woman. As a woman, the study participants felt that there were higher expectations of them versus their male counterparts; this made their jobs more difficult. This unfair expectation could be attributed to male leaders being viewed as the norm and women leaders being viewed as outside of the norm (Coleman, 2003).

Whether in their role as a female or as an African American each administrator developed strategies to cope with race and gender issues. Participants viewed the development of these strategies as imperative in order to strive and be successful in their roles. Many of the strategies involved the personal changing of communication style, personal appearance and mental strategies to ensure they would be seen in a positive manner. The need for the women to become chameleons and adjust to their surroundings took an emotional toll on the women. The psyche of

the women in transforming themselves to fit into situations and make others feel comfortable around them, at times, made them fragile and affected their address of situations.

Howard-Hamilton (2003) stated in the literature review that such abuses take a physical and mental toll on people of color. Adjusting the tone of voice, keeping the voice neutral, wearing hair and clothing in a style that is worn more by the dominant culture to make others feel comfortable, while all effective strategies employed by the participants to maneuver race and gender issues, revealed abuses that resulted in a need for multiple identities. The strategies were in turn an integral part in the African American woman educational administrator adapting to race and gender stereotypes. In adapting to these stereotypes the administrator went as far as changing her self-identity, even if only for a small time, to ensure she could fit in.

Despite the participants' strategies to be accepted and effect change most efficiently, they acknowledged still a lack of recognition for the work they accomplished, and encountering questioning of their ability to do their job. Collins (2009) in the literature review defined this as the "outsider-within" status where Black women were positioned in society, but never truly were allowed to be part of the White community.

How all of these challenging situations, strategies and past experiences helped to develop each administrator's leadership practices became apparent. Each administrator's leadership vision included the need to build capacity in their staff and to support and empower staff and students to strive to reach their highest potential. Building relationships and helping people to grow was embedded throughout each administrator's interview. The administrators' vision of building empowerment and skills in staff and students was a goal they all worked toward in making needed changes to ensure success in their schools.

These leadership traits—serving others to reach their highest potential—correspond to the traits of servant leadership found in the literature review. Greenleaf (1970) defined servant leadership (SL) as being focused toward the needs of the followers. The leader sees her self as being a servant first, understanding that the leader wants to serve and help others. Greenleaf (1970) remarked on the philosophy behind SL as a set of practices that improves the lives of people and also helps to improve organizations.

While the four African American women educational administrators shared a common vision for their leadership, the influences of their visions came from different venues. The administrators reflected on the impact that people, experiences and spirituality had influenced their vision and leadership practices. Some of their visions came from positive experiences and some from negative experiences. No matter if their experiences were positive or negative, all of the experiences included, provided the women with a strong sense of purpose and the building of confidence.

Strong adjectives were used to describe the persons who had influenced the women toward their current careers. Statements recounted in the interviews by the administrators from their influencers/role-models were often depended upon statements throughout their careers, helping them to persevere in their current positions in society. Statements such as: “If I hear the word ‘no’ then I am talking to the wrong person,” “God calls us to a higher calling. He calls us to change lives, so something will be different in the future,” and “Give back to the community.” Words such as: strong disciplined, beautiful, and powerful were shared by the administrators when describing the influential people in their lives.

One administrator did state that she hasn’t found someone who had influenced her in her life, someone who had pulled her in one direction or another. She reflected more on her personal

mission of taking negative situations and figuring out a way to change the situation to better others.

Changing the status quo and the need to make not only a difference, but a significant difference, in the current educational system has helped to develop the leadership style of these administrators. While a direct correlation was found in the study to servant leadership, other leadership styles also became evident. One administrator described her leadership style as transformational. Bass (1985) defined transformational leadership as the leader creating positive change by inspiring and motivating followers to commit to reaching an organization's goal. Transformational leaders provide their followers with a clear vision and help the followers by being role models to experience the same passion for the goal as the leader.

Conclusions by Research Question

Research Question One

What race/gender issues do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having impacted their leadership practices?

Research question one explored if the four African American educational administrators dealt with race/gender issues in their role as administrators. Findings from the study established that all of the participants in the study had experienced race/gender issues as an educational administrator. The four common areas in which the participants from the study encountered race/gender issues were: authority and decision-making, imposed stereotypes, appeasement, and performance skepticism.

Other challenging race/gender issues involved working with other colleagues, particularly White women and Black men. Three of the four administrators believed White women challenged them often. Also, three of the four women agreed that they at times found it difficult

to work with Black men. Three African American educational administrators reported that at times, Black men could be threatened by strong Black woman, and they thought this could be due to the Black man's perceived insecurities.

Further reflection was provided by the administrators, regarding the role of African American women and the felt need to make Black men feel good about themselves. The study participants stated that if they didn't make a Black male feel good about his self, there would be a perception that the Black woman, herself, was the problem. This perception aligns with the literature review. Collins (2009) stated that due to Black men being viewed as having experienced more racial oppression than Black women, Black women have in turn subjugated their needs to those of Black men. Black women have allowed themselves to be perceived as a person of subordinate status in order to help Black men regain and retain their manhood (Collins, 2009).

Research Question Two

What strategies do select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, report as having identified or implemented to address race/gender issues in their administrative practices?

Research question two gathered information regarding strategies the African American women educational administrators used to address race and gender issues. The strategies used:

1. Be upfront with your vision and expectations
2. Rely on self-reflection and mediation techniques
3. Make sure you are transparent
4. Make sure you stay ahead of everyone else.
5. Ensure communication is clear and frequent

6. Connect with someone else in the business who looks like them
7. Make sure to enunciate words and speak in a neutral tone
8. Dress according to the dominant culture's expectations
9. Confront others when being treated in a condescending manner
10. Make sure to gather feedback and do what is best for kids

Additionally, participants spoke to ensuring people are aware when a conversation is going to be about race. This strategy could be due to the issue of colorblindness in society, an issue addressed in Critical Race Theory. This theory supports the need to bring race and racism to the forefront.

Research Question Three

How have identified strategies of select African American women educational administrators, who work in Minnesota, assisted them in developing their leadership practices? Study data revealed how select applied strategies helped to guide the participating African American women educational administrators' leadership practices. The strategies that were formed to address race/gender issues assisted each administrator in forming their leadership and decision-making style. The findings revealed that all four administrators had a transformative and servant leadership style. Participants self-described as being authentic, passionate, being a change-agent and desiring to empower others. In developing a decisionmaking process, the administrators used collaborative processes and stated the importance of having strong leadership teams. Staff, students and parents' voices all played a role in the administrators' decision-making processes.

Limitations

All of the four participants in the study were willing to meet and participate in the research. Limitations experienced during this study included:

1. Periodic difficulties occurred in scheduling interviews due to work constraints, illness or participants being unavailable. For this research study, adjustments were made to the researcher's original scheduled allotted time in order to provide sufficient time to complete participants' interviews.
2. Views provided by the study's participants are based on their personal perceptions only.

Recommendations for Professional Practice

Raise Awareness. This study determined that society's perceptions and stereotypes surrounding race/gender issues were shared among the four Minnesotan African American educational leaders. The first step toward helping African American women in their educational positions is to bring awareness to the alternate narrative of African American women within educational leadership; and to recognize the necessity of training and discussion on the topic of race and gender intersectionality. In order for a significant change to come about in addressing the need of recognizing issues around race and gender in educational settings and how it affects African American women, policy discussions should be held on how race and equity will be addressed in school districts.

Critical Race Theory Training. A recommendation would be for educational institutions at all levels to explore and train on Critical Race Theory (CRT). Delgado and Stefancic's (2012) tenets of CRT could provide a critical step in people understanding how race plays a role in society. Professional development in CRT will provide learning on race as a social

construct, racism as a norm in our society and the importance of allowing people of color to share counterstories. This will be a beginning to having awareness amongst educational staff about racism and its affect on people of color.

Diversity Training. Further diversity training should occur with school board, cabinet members, district office staff and administrative staff (program directors, principals, etc.) on working with staff members of non-dominant races: (ex. Blacks, Latinos, Hmong).

Self-Awareness Training. Self-awareness by other administrators in school districts will play a more significant role in allowing the African American woman administrator greater opportunities to feel like an “insider” and to reduce the need to change who they are as an individual to fit in. This action is supported in the literature review through the use of selfawareness leadership (Showry & Mansa, 2014). Self-awareness leadership allows leaders to subjectively analyze their actions and become aware of their mental states, beliefs and desires as they interact in the workplace. School districts providing information on self-awareness to their administrators can assist administrators understand the impacts that they have on others. These actions could aid African American women administrators, as well as their colleagues in the district, to become aware of the impact that they have on each other.

Mentorship. It is recommended that school districts provide district level mentorship programs to support African American women interested in pursuing leadership. Such programs would allow African American women to have other woman to connect with professionally. It would be even further beneficial if mentors could be African American, in light of participants’ comments regarding felt stereotypes from White women. Due to the current lack of women administrative people of color, it is recommended that districts with small numbers of African American women administrators create partnerships with other school districts to provide

African American women mentorship programs or African American women affinity groups.

Gender Bias Training. Further recommendations are also needed to address gender issues. It is further recommended that training be provided to educational administrators on working with women and becoming aware of the biases and stereotypes about women that occur in school districts.

Recommendation for Further Study

This study involved a small sample size of women educational administrators who work in Minnesota. This study provided a small glimpse into the world of these women as Black educational administrators and how they handle/d the challenges of race/gender issues in their role as educators. From the information provided by the participants, more questions arose that would benefit from further research. The following recommendations are for further study in understanding the roles of African American women educational administrators:

- Additional research studies could be conducted using a larger sample group and demographic area. A larger sample group would help to further examine other African American women educational leadership experiences.
- Replicate the current study design using other racial/ethnic groups. For example, analyzing the perceptions and stereotypes that may affect women leadership practices within the following ethnic groups: Latino, Asian, Caucasian and first generation African. This replicate study could examine the unique and shared challenges of these groups.
- Additional research studies could be conducted on the relational dynamics between White women and Black women administrators to see how each influences/impacts each other in their roles as educational administrators.

- Additional research studies could be conducted on the working relationship between African American women educational administrators and African American male administrators and its influence on the African American woman's leadership practice/s.
- Additional research studies could be conducted on how school districts address race/gender issues in their district in their effort to support women administrators of color.

Summary

This research study brought awareness to the world of educational leadership on how society's perceptions about African American women impact African American women educational administrators' leadership practices. The impact of society's perceptions about African American women in turn influences beliefs about African American women educational administrators' attributes and their skills as leaders.

There is limited research found on African American women as educational leaders. Lack of literature on African American women in leadership positions leaves a void in addressing intersectionality issues (race and gender) that African American women educational administrators face (Byrd, 2014). Leadership experiences of African American women differ from others (Loque & Garcia, 2000; Kusum, 1998; Washington & Newman, 1991), and the continual lack of educational discourse surrounding African American women leadership allows for further stereotypes and perceptions to exist about African American women leaders.

The research questions from this study explored the race/gender issues encountered by African American educational leaders, what strategies they used to handle the race/gender issues

and lastly, how have the race/gender issues identified, developed each African American woman educational administrator's leadership practices.

Through the answers received from each educational administrator the sensitive issue of race and the role of gender were exposed. While the job of educational administrators is a challenging one, adding the intersectionality of race and gender to the administrative role can, at times make the job seem insurmountable.

Each educational administrator brought emotion, confidence, passion and tiredness to their participation in this study. They want to stop being marginalized. They want to be recognized, and have the right to be their real self—this was a thread that ran throughout the participants' interviews. It was apparent, that the need to work for social justice in the area of education is continual and stills needs to be fought for by the African American women educational administrators.

The participating educational administrators felt at times that they were fighting alone to address inequities in which they were experiencing and their students were experiencing. Systemic help was and is still looked for from the administrators. The need for continued district equity training and the importance of school district cabinet members' awareness of the challenges that African American women administrators face, draws the Black woman administrator into yet another battle—a battle which at times will support society's perceptions of the African American woman administrator being the "angry Black women."

District cabinet support is needed to help change these stereotypes about African American women educational administrators. The population of students of color in Minnesota schools continues to be on the rise, and the number of African American women entering the field of educational administration is low. This study evidenced that support of current African

American women educational administrators' ideas, and recognition of their challenges, needs to be acknowledged.

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